

THE HOLY CITY

UC-NRLF



B 3 342 318

BERKELEY
LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

THE HOLY CITY

THE HOLY CITY

A Tragedy and Allegory

IN THREE ACTS

BY

DOROTHY ST. CYRES

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C. 4

NEW YORK, TORONTO

BOMBAY, CALCUTTA AND MADRAS

1922

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW.

960
51367
hol

CHARACTERS

THE PROPHET OF THE PLAIN - *Called by his followers "The Master."*
HARCON - - - - - *A Noble of the City of the Plain ; follower
of The Master.*
MILO, }
FESTUS, }
DRASTON, } - - - - - *Disciples of The Master.*
SERVIAN, }
BRUNO, }
MARCO, }
MYRTON, } - - - - - *Nobles of the City of the Plain.*
VITUS, - - - - - *Noble, betrothed to Mahrah.*
A MAN.
A PRIEST.
A GOATHERD.
MAHRAH'S MOTHER, - - - *Widow of a Noble.*
MAHRAH, - - - - - *Betrothed to Vitus.*
BEATA, - - - - - *Daughter of Harcon.*
IRENE, }
PAULA, } - - - - - *Daughters of Nobles.*
DRASTON'S WIFE, - - - *Follower of the Master.*
TWO WOMEN, - - - - - *Followers of The Master.*

DISCIPLES OF THE MASTER, CROWD OF THE CITY,
NOBLES, DANCERS, MUSICIANS, *Etc.*

“ He looked for a City which hath foundations,
whose builder and maker is God.”

ACT ONE

ACT ONE

TIME : *The Past.*

SCENE : *The Scene is laid in the Chief City of the Plain.*

A garden shaded by high trees, standing round a fountain. Two marble figures form the centre of the fountain : one, representing Time, a man of passionless face ; the other, Love, a boy, whom Time is killing. Near the fountain a stone bench. To the left of the scene steps lead to the door of MAHRAH'S house, which closes in the garden on one side. The rest of the garden is surrounded by a wall, crowned by a balustrade, on which grow irises—purple irises and white. In the middle of the wall, at the back of the scene, there is a wrought-iron door, and a flagged path leads from it to a small arbour or temple, half-hidden by trees. There is yet another entrance to the garden, on the extreme right.

It is a summer evening, still early ; the heat is great ; and, though within the garden there is deep shadow from the trees, here and there the sun breaks through the close-set leaves, throwing fierce patches of light.

(MAHRAH'S MOTHER is sitting on the stone bench, her back to the steps and house.

MAHRAH comes slowly down the steps towards her.)

MOTHER *(Turning and seeing MAHRAH).*

Mahrah ? At last ! I feared you would not come,

And I have grown so weary, waiting here.

The day seemed endless, and the night so far.

(MAHRAH stands by her mother a moment ; then moves to the fountain, seating herself on its edge.)

MAHRAH (*Half to herself*).

The day seemed endless ? Yes,—and the night far.

I had not known a day could be so long.

But all things pass away, vanish . . . and pass.

Yet . . . are the new things better than the old ?

We pray for night to ease the pain of day,

But is night come, we cry aloud for dawn.

(*She gazes, brooding, into the water.*)

MOTHER (*Looking at her anxiously ; with forced brightness*).

Hark ! As I watched for you, there came a dream,

So full of life and joy, I see it yet,

Sunshine, and flowers, and a white rob'd bride.

Your wedding day. . . .

MAHRAH (*Absently repeating*) My wedding day ?

MOTHER. Ah ! child,

Life passes ; I grow old . . . Let it be soon.

MAHRAH (*Still absently*).

My wedding day ? . . . No ! no ! That was a dream.

(*She breaks off suddenly, listening.*)

A distant murmur of sound is heard from the City without.

MAHRAH springs to her feet, and begins to walk towards the door at the back of the scene, crying out :

MAHRAH. The Master comes.

MOTHER (*Half-rising, calls to her*). Your promise, Mahrah !—

Wait !

MAHRAH (*Hesitates, stops ; then, turning back, with agitation*).

And who am I to promise ? Who am I ?

A traitor . . . liar, Mother, yes, I am,

For I am faithless to the truth I know,

And false unto myself. Oh ! let me speak.

These long, long months you have been patient . . . yes !

You thought : " She's but a strange, a wayward child,"

And so were very patient, silent, too,

And silence kills . . . Remember, silence kills.

You would not listen, I . . . I could not speak.

But now I must . . . I must, or . . . never more.

Mother, I love you . . . Life is very hard.

I think it all began long years ago,

When I was still a child. It seems so now.

You said : " Be happy, Mahrah ; sing, play, laugh."

You were a child yourself, so young and fair.

Then came a day which changed the world for me.

We walked together,—Giovio, you and I,—

One spring-time, in a wood of glad, green life,

Which echoed with the triumph-song of birds.

And we were happy—he, and you, and I.

And with us came the hound my brother loved.

Then, as we walked, beneath the trees there stole

A hurrying form, and Giovio cried : " A hare ! "

And clapped his hands, and the great hound sprang forth.

Then, Mother,—Ah ! I hear it . . . hear it still,

And ever shall—there rang throughout the wood

A cry of fear, of agony, of death,

So bitter that it killed the joy of spring.
Again the cry rang out. Then . . . silence . . . peace,
Save for the triumph-singing of the birds.

MOTHER (*Interrupting*). Mahrah, I pray you . . .

MAHRAH. No ! no ! Let me speak.

From that day onwards, though you knew it not,
There was a shadow in my life which grew.
And no one understood, or seemed to care.
For Giovio laughed, he praised his hound, and laughed.
And you stood there, and called to him : " Well done,"
Though, all the while, there in the quick'ning wood
The hare lay dead—life gone for ever—dead !
And no one asked the reason it need die,
And no one understood, or seemed to care.
The years went on, and still the shadow grew.
Always, beneath the singing of the birds,
I heard a cry of terror and of pain.
You thought me sad and silent, and you said :
" Take life with joy. Be happy. Sing—play—laugh."
And no one understood, or seemed to care.
Then, Mother, then—I would not hurt you, dear,—
There came that day they brought us Giovio home,
Back from the chase which he had loved so well.
—Brother . . . beloved brother . . . dearest . . . best !—
Mother, you know he did not want to die.
The pain was torture, racked him through and through,
But yet . . . he was so young, he longed to live.
And I—I could not help, nor ease the pain.

I could but press his hand, and watch him die,
And say, "I love you, dearest . . . and . . . I know."
He did not want to die, he prayed to live.
The priest came from the sad, grey church, and said :
"God's will is best—it's happier far for him."
But, Mother, Giovio did not want to die.
The birds were singing . . . singing all the time,
The day he died . . . and . . . no one understood.

(She breaks down, in an agony of weeping.)

THE MOTHER *rises, goes to MAHRAH, putting her hand on her shoulder.*

MOTHER. My child ! my child ! why will you hurt yourself ?

MAHRAH *(Controls herself with difficulty, kisses her mother ; then leads her back to the bench).*

Forgive me, Mother, I would tell you all.

Five years have passed since then, five weary years.

At first I prayed for death, then feared to die.

Yes ! in despite the pain, I feared to die.

I could not face the darkness till I knew,

Whether or no there lived a God who cared.

The priest, the Church said : "Christ." But Christ is dead.

And then you spoke of marriage, told me how

The cruel wound of life is often healed

At touch of baby hands. And Vitus came.

And, though the shadow deepen'd, all the while,

I tried to love him, for I thought that love

Might bring the longed-for answer to my life.

But still the shadow deepen'd, all the while.

Then, as, last year, the leaves began to fall,
And days grew dark and chill, the rumour came
Of a great prophet, who, throughout the land,
Drew men once more to God, for he brought proof,
Yes! mighty, living proof, God Is and . . . cares.

MOTHER. Mahrah, I cannot . . . will not listen more.

The man is good . . . is holy, if you will,

But . . . mad.

MAHRAH. Then mad are all the saints of God.

MOTHER (*Reproachfully*). Nay, hear me out, I have been patient
long.

I let you give your time, both day and night,
To all the sick and poor of this great town,
For him you call "The Master" let you toil.
I have not thwarted you, nor turned aside,
But waited, ever hoping you would change
And see things as they are, until, at last,
You came and told me you must leave your home,
To follow him, "The Master." You leave . . . me!

MAHRAH. Mother, forgive!

MOTHER (*Cutting her short, with emotion*).

And, when I ask, Why go?

"To seek the mountains"—that is all you say.

"To seek the mountains, and a City there,
Which, he says, God has built." A vision! Dream!
Why, Mahrah, child, but that I love you so,
And that to see you suffer breaks my heart,
I could have laughed that day,—not now . . . not now,—

When first you spoke. It was so clear to me,
And must be clear to you, alas ! I thought,
The City was a dream, and he was mad.

MAHRAH. A dream the City ? And The Master . . . mad ?

If it is mad to put God and His Truth
Above men and their lies, then, he is mad.
If it is mad to give all that you are,
Heart, body, brain and soul, for those you love,
And to love all alive, then, he is mad.
If it is mad to succour, help, and save ;
To listen in all sorrow and all doubt ;
To suffer in all failure and all sin ;
And, so, to bear the pain of this sad world,
Through pity and through love . . . he, then, is mad.
The passion of his pity and his love !
Oh ! Mother, Mother, can't you understand ?
You would not see him, would not hear him preach,
Although I begged you to, you would not come.
But, still, you saw him once. Can you forget ?
Think of the night Beata nearly died.
That sudden terror—Harcon crazed with grief.
(She is his idol, though he seems so hard)—
And we, all helpless, waiting . . . Then he came,
Yes ! though with bitter word and cruel gibe,
Harcon had ever tried to cast him forth
From out the City gates, and, when that failed,
Had mocked and jeered, yet, in his need, he called.
The Master came, and you . . . you thought him . . . mad !

MOTHER. Mahrah, I pray you, cease . . . or speak with calm.

It may be you are right. The man is good.

That both, that night, he saved ; it well may be.

But . . . what he preaches now ! His brain is turned.

To say that in the mountains, far away,

Those mountains we have heard of, never seen,

There is a Holy City, built for men . . .

MAHRAH (*Interrupting*). A City built for men, and built of
God,

Where all who seek, at last shall find and know.

MOTHER. But what is there to know ? The Truth is known.

MAHRAH. Oh ! Have you never asked, in wild despair,

Is there a meaning . . . reason for it all ?

A reason . . . and a justice . . . and . . . a hope ?

We have been happy, Mother, you and I ;

We have had much, all that this world can give,

But think of those, the weak, the doomed, the lost,

The nameless thousands who have lived and died,

Without a chance of good, or hope of joy.

What does it mean for them, this life of ours ?

Long years of bitter struggle, pain, and sin,

And, at the end, for all . . . a mound of earth.

The pain to count for nothing, nor the fight.

The end, for each and all . . . a mound of earth.

I hear their cry. Surely you hear it too ?

It haunts me ever, will not let me rest.

The cry of those fore-doomed from birth to fail,

The men and women who have had no chance !

MOTHER (*Hesitatingly*). That may be . . . Life is hard . . . but,
then . . . the Church . . .

MAHRAH (*Interrupting bitterly*). Ah! not the Church. She
stands so far from men,

They seem but sinners, and she cannot help.

I want a Church so holy, vast and free,

That even Sin can find an entrance there,

To learn its meaning, and, through that, its hope.

MOTHER (*Shocked*). But do you, then, forget all thought of
Heaven?

MAHRAH (*Passionately*). And Hell beneath . . . or so the
Churches teach,

With everlasting torture for the dead.

If that were true . . . Mother, if that were true,

I cannot then but feel, if Christ were God,

He had not stayed three days in Hell . . . three days!—

But through eternity, till Hell was . . . Heaven.

MOTHER. Hush! Hush! I cannot let you speak like that.

You shock me . . . grieve me. No! I will not hear.

Why must you fret and question? Life is good.

Be happy, child!

MAHRAH. Be happy! Is that all?

MOTHER. Oh! you are sad to-night, I know it well,

Because they leave. But, patience, that will pass.

And, though you suffer now, you will rejoice

You saw in time, your duty, and stayed here.

For duty done brings ever happiness.

Your duty is with Vitus, and with me.

(A pause ; then, nervously.)

There is no change ? They leave the town . . . ?

MAHRAH *(In a low voice).*

At dawn.

(Dreamily, to herself.)

When first the silent streets are waked from sleep,
Called to new life by the great, loving sun,
They will go forth from out the City gates.
And then the long, white road will lead them on,
Through burnish'd fields of golden, summer corn,
Through murm'ring woods, through grassy, wind-swept plains,
Through villages, where he will heal the sick,
Still on . . . still on . . . through all the radiant day.
And then, the little lights of distant farms ;
The hush of eve ; sweet scents ; the deep'ning gloom.
So, out into the living peace of night.
And, all above, the holy stars of God ;
And, all beneath, His holy, holy world.

(She is silent ; then, suddenly, to her mother, with emotion.)

Oh, Mother, I have said that I will stay.

You know I love you . . . know . . .

The door on the right opens. BEATA enters, coming quickly across the garden towards MAHRAH and her mother.

MOTHER *(Seeing Beata).* Hush ! Someone comes.

MAHRAH *(Turning).* Beata ?

MOTHER. Yes, Beata. *(Aside.)* What ill chance !

I thought the parting over. Now she comes,
And my poor child will grieve herself still more.

MAHRAH *moves away, and leans against one of the trees near the fountain.*

BEATA. I come to say farewell. We leave at dawn.

MOTHER (*To her*). All good be with you, child, where'er you go.

I cannot help, alas! but think you wrong.

Yet ever what I said I said in love,

And so, in love, I hope, we two now part?

BEATA. Ah, but indeed I thank you for those words.

For it is hard to feel old friends estranged.

I know you hold me wrong, still, in despite,

Think of us both with kindness, when you can.

(*They embrace tenderly.*)

MOTHER. Mahrah will need you now, and so I leave.

(*Then, hurriedly, low, to Beata.*)

Beata, she is all I have.—Farewell.

(*To herself, as she turns away.*)

I must fetch Vitus, he should be with her.

If but to-morrow were safe come and gone.

(*She goes up steps, and disappears into the house.*)

BEATA *comes to Mahrah; puts her hand on her shoulder.*

BEATA. And so the end has come—and you stay here?

MAHRAH (*Looking away*). And I stay here.

BEATA. The harder part is yours.

How much the harder, only you can tell.

Yet, as I know, The Master hoped and thought . . .

(She breaks off; then hesitates.)

But you . . . you saw him ? . . . told him that you stay ?

MAHRAH *(Still looking away)*. I saw him . . . yes. And told him that I stay.

BEATA. And there is nothing changed ? You said farewell ?

(MAHRAH does not answer.)

How still the evening grows. No stir of life,

Or faintest murmur from the town below.

Yet, had you seen the mighty waiting throng

Which filled the market-place, to hear him speak,

You might have thought, an echo of their grief

Would reach us here. My father stayed behind.

For, this last night, he brings him to our home . . .

MAHRAH *(Turning to Beata, with great emotion)*. Have pity ! Oh,

Beata, speak to me,

And tell me I am right . . . that I must stay ?

If only I could die, and so end all.

Tell me you think me right ?—That I must stay ?

BEATA *(Distressed)*. I did not mean to pain you . . . did not dream . . .

How gladly would I help you, if I could.

But what is there to say ? You know it all.

You are your mother's . . .

MAHRAH.

Only child.—I know.

All that she has on earth . . . I know !—I know !

Why, I have told it to myself all day,

And not to-day alone, but every day,

And all day long, till I felt growing mad.

Yet—is it right of her to kill my soul?

For that is what she does . . . she kills my soul.

BEATA. You do her wrong—she would not kill your soul.

MAHRAH. The Master told us once,—do you forget?—

“Truth is a beacon, set to save those souls

Who else must perish in the seas of doubt.”

Well, in those seas I perish, if I stay.

BEATA. That need not be. It lies with you alone.

MAHRAH (*With increasing agitation*). I tell you, if I stay, the
light will fail,

The beacon vanish . . . all once more be dark.

It cannot be; it is not just . . . or right.

(*Breaks off; then*)

My mother has been happy all her life.

The years have brought no question and no care.

BEATA. How can you tell? The secret of each life

Is surely kept, even from those we love.

MAHRAH. How can I tell? If she had suffered once

As I am suffering now, she'd bid me go.

BEATA. Why judge her, then? Be patient. All may change.

MAHRAH. Be patient? But life passes . . . and we die!

Ah! tell me what it means, this life of ours,

If you can trace a meaning through its pain?

BEATA. The Master gives an answer, as you know,

And preaches God made manifest on earth.

Not only in the hearts and lives of those

Who do His will, but in a City fair,
Where He will show the meaning in His time.

MAHRAH. The Master—yes, he says so . . . Could I know !
Ah ! not to hope . . . to think . . . but once . . . to know !

(She walks up and down, with great agitation.)

Forget ! I had not meant to speak. Forget !
Mother, poor Mother . . . I was very wrong.
If only I were different . . . more like her.
And yet, she loves me, and she needs me, too.
Ah ! God, were I but different.

(She stops short.)

*A sudden noise is heard ; then, faint at first, but growing
more and more distinct, shouts and cries.*

MAHRAH. Hark !—a cry !

BEATA. I hear no sound.

MAHRAH *(Straining to hear)*. Hush ! Hush !—Again it comes.

BEATA *(Listening too)*. Why, you are right—it was a sudden
cry . . .

And now . . . another. Listen ! . . . Shouts and cries !

MAHRAH. The sound is surely from the market-place ?

BEATA. But it comes ever nearer, and more near.

They must be leaving, and they come this way.

*BOTH stand listening, while the murmur of sound grows
and swells till at last the cries and shouts of a great
approaching crowd are heard plainly, beyond the
garden walls.*

MAHRAH *(To herself)*. I dare not see his face. It must not
be.

BEATA. I told you they were coming. Now they come.

And, Mahrah, I must leave you . . . cannot wait.

For there is much to order, ere we go.

MAHRAH (*Holding Beata's arm*).

Ah! do not leave me yet. I beg you stay.

Alone, I cannot bear the pain. Ah! stay.

BEATA. Yet, though it grieves me, I must go.

MAHRAH.

Ah! stay.

A fresh tumult of noise is heard; this time, close, outside the garden.

BEATA. But . . . listen . . . they are here, and at your gate.

I should have left before. I dare not stay,

Or they will reach home first. Now . . . do they go?

There seems a hush . . . a silence . . . someone speaks . . .

The Master?

MAHRAH (*Listening*). No. Your father.

BEATA.

Yes, 'tis he.

And, for the last time, Mahrah, we must part.

Farewell. (*She kisses her.*) Farewell. I go.

MAHRAH (*Desperately, holding Beata, who tries to free herself*).

Beata, wait!

Tell him I cannot come . . . I have to stay—

It breaks my mother's heart . . . and so I stay—

Yes, though it kills me . . . God! He's coming here.

A great roar of sound surges from the road outside.

MAHRAH lets go her hold of BEATA, who darts away to the right, but then stops short, listening.

There is a noise of tramping feet, swaying crowds, shouts, cries, and then, above the tumult, single voices are heard :

VOICE. God save The Master !

ANOTHER.

Hear him !

Yet ANOTHER.

Let him pass !

There are yet louder shouts. Then the iron door at the back of the scene is flung open, and in the doorway are seen the grey-clad figures of four of The Master's DISCIPLES, pressing back the crowd, and HARCON.

HARCON, facing the crowd and beckoning to someone beyond, calls out excitedly :

HARCON. Milo, this way . . . this way. No, no ! . . . Through here. I pray you, let him pass . . . Yes, yes ! . . . through here.

There is a movement visible among the crowd ; then a sudden hush.

VOICE (*Without*). Speak to us, Master—speak !

ANOTHER.

Have pity !—Stay !

Then THE MASTER'S VOICE is heard WITHOUT.

THE MASTER. I pray you, little children, go in peace,
And may God keep you, now and evermore.

HARCON (*To the crowd*).

Now, Milo, quick, this way . . . here, through the door.

No, no ! You cannot pass . . . (*To Milo*). Yes, through the door.

There is a fresh stir in the crowd by the door, the DISCIPLES pressing back the people still more. Then, through

the cleared path, hedged by protecting arms, THE MASTER comes. He stops on the threshold, turns to bless the crowd, then passes slowly into the garden, MILO following him.

HARCON *and the four disciples, FESTUS, SERVIAN, BRUNO and DRASTON, hold back the crowd.*

MILO *stops him, and points to the arbour hidden in the shadow of the trees.*

MILO. Master, will you not rest, till Harcon comes
To lead us home ?

THE MASTER. Yes, I will wait for him.

(He turns, and disappears within the arbour.)

MILO *goes back to help HARCON with the crowd.*

HARCON *(To the crowd).* I said before, I cannot let you pass.

The Master will speak to you once again.

Now, let him rest. Here, Milo, close the door.

(Angrily).

I tell you, he must rest. *(To the disciples.)*

Now ! close the door.

As HARCON says " Now ! " THE DISCIPLES push away the people, spring back, and HARCON slams the door on the crowd.

HARCON *(With a cry of relief).* At last !

MILO.

At last !

HARCON, MILO *and the four DISCIPLES stand a moment, overcome with the effort they have made ; then they move slowly forward.*

MAHRAH *is on the extreme left of the scene, nearly hidden from view by the trunk of a great tree to which she turned and clung as The Master entered the garden.*

BEATA, *on the right, has been standing, watching, and now goes quickly to her father.*

BEATA.

Father, you do not see . . .

HARCON (*Surprised, coming to her*).

Beata! You? And here? Then, all is well.

But where is he? . . . The Master . . . has he gone?

MILO (*Pointing*). He waits within the harbour till you call.

HARCON (*To Beata*). You did not think to see us come this way?

But there was little hope to pass the crowd

Which thronged the lower road; and so, at last,

We tried this lane, and then were forced in here.

Shouts and cries are again heard from the crowd WITHOUT.

HARCON (*Annoyed*). Why, they are waiting yet.

(*To BEATA, who shrinks at the noise.*) Nay, do not fear.

The door is strong . . . will hold.

(*Fresh clamour from the crowd.*)

They soon must go.

MILO. Think you I should go back and speak to them?

FESTUS. What say you, Harcon?

BRUNO.

It were surely best.

HARCON (*Angrily*).

Why speak to them? I told them they must go.

BRUNO. But if they stay and cry out yet again,

It may be he will hear their call and go.

SERVIAN. There is no need to think that he will hear.

BRUNO. But if he did?

(*Still louder cries.*) Ah! they cry out once more.

MILO. And all last night he prayed with them, and preached,
And all the night before.

(*Again the cries.*) Harcon, I go.

BRUNO (*To Milo*). But not alone.

DRASTON (*To Milo*). We'll come with you, to help.

HARCON (*Still annoyed*).

Well! Go—if you still think that he will hear.

But do not stay; remember, it grows late.

And, is it free, come back the lower road.

MILO. I promise I'll not stay.—Now! —Keep the door.

HARCON, FESTUS and SERVIAN *open the door with caution,*
while the other three slip out. The door is shut.

At first, louder shouts are heard, which die gradually away.
Then again comes a sound of tramping feet, swaying
crowds, and so, at last, silence.

BEATA. Listen!—They go at last.

HARCON. Yes, child, at last.

SERVIAN. I hardly thought we should get free to-night.

FESTUS. Nor I! That mighty rush of struggling men...

SERVIAN. When they swept down that side-street, by the bridge...

FESTUS. And, later, when we turned, outside this gate...

SERVIAN. Had Harcon not been with us, we were lost.

HARCON (*With relief*).

Not lost. There was no fear—I knew the way.

Thank God to-day is over, though, the last.

And now, The Master? Shall I go to him?

Or wait until he calls?

FESTUS.

Oh, surely wait !

SERVIAN. Yet he, remember, should have rest and food.

HARCON. Well, I can wait awhile, then go to him.

But is there need for more than one to stay ?

Beata, lead them home, we follow soon.

BEATA (*To FESTUS and SERVIAN, who follow her, as she moves away to the right*).

This is the way, our garden lies through here.

ALL THREE *disappear through the door on the right.*

HARCON *waits a few moments ; then, peering through the trees, moves towards the arbour.*

HARCON (*To himself*). He does not move . . . I cannot see his face . . .

It may be that he prays, or it may be

The vision of the City glorious,

Where Truth is known, and men shall be as kings,

Holds once again his soul in ecstasy.

Yet, he must rest ; the darkness closes in.

I will no longer wait, but call to him.

(*Calling to The Master.*)

Master ! (*To himself.*) He does not hear. I'll call again.

THE MASTER *is seen, coming slowly from the arbour. There is still the rapt, far look on his face.*

HARCON. Master !

THE MASTER. You called ? I . . . Have I been here long ?

HARCON. Forgive. I had not called, but it grows late,

And you are weary, and should rest. Forgive.

THE MASTER (*His hand on Harcon's shoulder*).

It is not I who should forgive, but you.

To keep you waiting, here.

HARCON (*Seizing his hand ; with fervour*). I gladly wait. (*Then pointing.*)

But now, I pray you, let me lead you home.

Our garden door is there, through those dark trees.

They move slowly away to the right, HARCON leading.

MAHRAH *who till now has remained motionless behind the tree, seeing them go, springs forward and runs after The Master.*

MAHRAH. Master!—Have pity!—Stay, and speak to me!

THE MASTER (*Turning*). What, Mahrah?—You are here?

MAHRAH. I saw you come,
And waited, for I could not let you go.

THE MASTER. Mahrah! Poor child! (*To Harcon*). No, do not wait. I'll come.

HARCON *shakes his head and is about to protest, but at a sign from THE MASTER he desists and walks away through the trees, disappearing through the door on the right.*

THE MASTER. Now, tell me all.

MAHRAH. I thought I could be brave,
And oh, believe, that I have tried to be.
But now I have no hope, no courage left.
I do not want to question, or to doubt,
But the great "Why?" of suffering and of Death,
It drives, it scourges me to ask, and . . . ask . . .

And there's no answer . . . or for me to hear.

Ah! yes, I know what you have said . . . will say,

That "God is in all pain." But is it just?

THE MASTER (*Calmly, radiantly*).

My child, God cares. I know that He is just.

MAHRAH. When you are here, I feel it, know it, too;

But when you go, and there is none to help . . .

To-day, I tried to tell my mother all,

To show her all my soul. You asked me to.

She said: "Why fret and question? Life is good.

Be happy, child."

THE MASTER. Poor mother! And poor child!

MAHRAH (*Despairingly*). Yes, that is true—poor mother, and
. . . poor child!

Oh! Master, what is right? What must I do?

THE MASTER. There is a "right" for every living soul,
But that right way is sought and found alone.

I cannot help you there. Do what you must.

MAHRAH (*Repeating*). "Is sought and found, alone"? You
cannot help?

THE MASTER. And yet, remember, there are those for whom
Life must mean God, or . . . nothing. You are one.

MAHRAH (*Eagerly*). But is that true, then . . .

THE MASTER. No, I dare not say.
The way to God is different for each soul,
And you must find your way.

MAHRAH. And if I fail?

THE MASTER. The way is dark . . . so dark, you see no light ?
Mahrah, I understand, I know it well.
But, child, the answer to your question, doubt,
It lies in you, your soul, and not in me.
I could say, "Come," or, "Stay," but I will not.
God give you courage. That is what I pray.
To every man and woman on this earth
I'd cry aloud, with thousand tongues, "Be brave."
Do not look down on Fear, it teaches much.
But Fear should ever lead away from Fear,
Till courage, God-like courage, has been won.
Learn to gain strength from Fear; from Doubt gain
Truth.
Be brave, and know, and then yourself you'll say :
"I go"—or else : "I stay."

MAHRAH.

Ah ! Life is hard.

THE MASTER. Thank God that life is hard. So, is it worth the
while.

MAHRAH. I cannot feel like that. If I but could.

You have both faith and courage. I am weak.

THE MASTER. It was not always thus. I, too, am weak.
There was a time—to-night it seems so far,
Almost another life, it seems so far—
And yet, from that sad yesterday has grown
My glad to-day. I was as you are now.
Life seemed to me a cruel, iron trap,
And I the tortured beast it caught and held.

(After a pause.)

What is it written on your fountain there ?

“ Time ever killeth Love ”—Yes, so I thought,
And, thinking so, despaired, for all seemed vain.
I had not asked to live . . . and feared to die.
I cursed my mother, who had given me life.

(He breaks off, and is lost in thought.)

MAHRAH *(Softly)*. Master, you know ? You, too, have felt . . .
and . . . then ?

THE MASTER *(Rousing himself)*.

And then ?—The fight !—The failure, and . . . the fight !
Yes ! That is life, to strive, endure, and . . . fail,
For through defeat alone, comes victory !

A silence falls between them.

MAHRAH *(Very low)*. I promise. I will try.

THE MASTER *(Looks at her earnestly ; then with a grave smile)*.
You will, I know.

And, Mahrah, blot the writing from that stone.
Time does not kill, though it must always change,
For even the most perfect things must change,
Because the Law is growth. All life is growth.
Time does not kill, it changes. Is Love true,
It ever grows more pure and beautiful.

(He takes her hand and holds it for a moment ; then goes following where Harcon went before.)

MAHRAH. Have mercy, God, and show me what is right !

She sinks down on the edge of the fountain, her face buried in her hands.

It is very still. The light fades fast, and the whole garden lies hushed in the grave peace of evening.

VITUS comes through the door of Mahrah's house, and runs hurriedly down the steps towards her.

VITUS. Mahrah !

MAHRAH (*Springing up, dazed and frightened*). Who calls me ?

VITUS. Mahrah, I am here.

MAHRAH. What ? Vitus, is it you ? You frightened me.

VITUS (*Reproachfully*).

I frighten you by coming ? Is that kind ?

MAHRAH. I did not know . . . I thought I was alone . . .

VITUS (*Hotly*). And wished to be. When do you want me now ?

Oh ! yes, I know ! Those preaching saints of yours . . .

(MAHRAH gives a low cry, and he pulls himself up.)

I would not hurt you. Pardon me, my own !

(*Seizes her hands ; with passion.*)

For you are mine, and ever shall be mine,

And none shall come between. I tell you, none.

No, no ! I am not vexed or wroth with you,

For yours is not the fault. How should it be ?

Why, do you know how beautiful you are ?

My own ! My Queen !

MAHRAH (*Shrinking away from him*). In pity, say no more.

It cannot be. Have pity—say no more.

VITUS (*Repeating*). “ In pity, say no more ”—“ It cannot be ”—

You mean that I should free you ?—Are you mad ?

MAHRAH (*Urgently*).

Yes! Give me back the promise that I gave.

VITUS (*Violently*).

Good God! Your promise, Mahrah, give it back?

Why, I would rather see you lying dead,

Mine still in death, and kill myself with you.

No, no! You would but try me . . . do not mean . . .

MAHRAH. With all my soul I mean it. Let me go.

VITUS (*Drawing her again to him, with increasing passion*).

It is not true—I say it is not true.

No, Mahrah, no! you cannot so forget

All that you are . . . that makes you what you are,

Your sweetness, and your gentleness to all,

Your love—for me, your mother—and your word,

Your pledged, given word. It is not true.

(She wrests herself from him.)

My God! you mean it, then? You would go free?

Fool that I was . . . fool! . . . fool! . . . to let you know

That whining saint . . . those canting hypocrites,

Whose evil work this is—God's curse on them.

MAHRAH. You shall not speak like that—you have no right.

If you would listen . . . try to understand . . .

For it is I, myself . . .

VITUS (*Interrupting*). I tell you, no!

I am no longer deaf and blind, I see

How they have worked on you, and schemed, and planned.

But one thing they forget . . . I still am here.

I hold you to your promise. You shall stay.

MAHRAH (*With great agitation*).

Oh ! you do wrong . . . wrong to yourself and me.

Unless we have one purpose for our life,

Are one in mind and soul, how can we love ?

The fault is mine—Forgive !—I see it now.

But, when I answered “ Yes ” I did not know.

I thought . . . I hoped . . . that I might learn to love.

VITUS. And so you will. I swear to you, you will.

I will be patient . . . teach you . . . make you love.

MAHRAH. Love is not taught.

VITUS (*Seizing her hands again*). But I can prove you wrong.

You do not dream what love like mine can do.

No, no ! You cannot mean it. Mahrah,—speak !

Tell me you do not mean it—will be mine.

You are a saint, all tenderness and love ;

You cannot kill the man who trusts in you.

You are too good . . . too true to break your word.

MAHRAH (*With a cry of despair*). I am too weak !

VITUS (*Triumphantly, taking her in his arms*).

Thank God ! It makes you mine.

Oh ! I have suffered, hungered so for you

That you must pardon if I seem too wild.

I know that I am hasty, jealous, sweet.

But then . . . I love you so.

MAHRAH.

You love me so !

VITUS. And, Mahrah . . . listen ! . . . do not make me wait.

I claim at last the right you freely gave,

Which I, in blindness, did not urge on you,

I was too patient . . . now, I cannot wait.

Why turn away, beloved? Look at me.

Come, let us fix our marriage-day . . . to-night.

MAHRAH. I cannot . . . give you answer . . . not to-night.

I . . . I am tired, Vitus . . . not to-night.

If you would come to-morrow . . . leave me now . . .

VITUS (*Suspiciously*).

But why not answer now? Why not to-night?

MAHRAH (*With agitation*).

I tell you . . . I am tired . . . cannot think.

To-morrow . . . come to-morrow . . . wait till then . . .

Ah! wait till then, and I will answer all.

But not to-night.

(*With sudden terror*.) O God! That cry! that cry!

VITUS. But are you frightened? Tell me . . . what is wrong?

MAHRAH. Do you not hear it too?—Yes! there . . . again!

VITUS. I hear no sound. Why do you tremble, sweet?

In the distance a nightingale is heard singing.

MAHRAH (*Wildly*). The birds!—I hear the birds!—Once more,
they sing!

O God, is someone dying here to-night?

VITUS (*Trying to calm her*). But there is nothing, Mahrah, do
not fear.

What ails you, then? You look so strange . . . so wild . . .

MAHRAH (*Still trembling, but trying to command herself*).

I thought . . . forgive! . . . No! there is nothing wrong.

I told you I am tired . . . that is all . . .

I shall be different, when to-morrow comes.

VITUS. You still would have me leave you ?

MAHRAH.

Yes, I pray.

VITUS. Ah, when you pray, for me there is no choice.

Yet, do you know how hard it is to part ?

Had I but hope that you would come to-night,

When, later, you are rested, 'twere not hard.

MAHRAH (*Not understanding*). But where, then, is it, you would have me come ?

VITUS. To Clito's banquet.—Did you then forget ?

MAHRAH (*With horror*). To Clito's banquet ?—No, I cannot come.

VITUS (*Urging*). There will be music, dancing, all the night.

Come !—come !

MAHRAH.

You know full well I never go.

VITUS. Of late you have not been, only of late.

Oh ! you have grown too sad and full of thought,

Too full of grim, dark things you think mean Life.

Come out into the sunshine, leave the shade,

For Life is brave and beautiful and young,

And, Mahrah, so are you. Come, leave the shade !

(MAHRAH *shakes her head sadly.*)

You will not ? Well, I must not press you more.

But when, at last, you are for ever mine . . .

(*He bends over her and embraces her.*)

Good-night, belov'd. Yet, once more, good-night.

(*He lingers, bending over her again ; then, as he tears himself away, with triumph.*)

I shall be with you when to-morrow comes !

(He goes the way he came.)

MAHRAH *stands, in hopeless suffering, as one stunned.*

Then, putting her hand to her forehead, trying to remember, she says slowly, painfully :

MAHRAH. "And yet . . . remember . . . there are those . . . for whom Life must mean . . . God . . ."

Her MOTHER'S VOICE is heard calling to her from within the house :

MOTHER.

Mahrah ! Has Vitus gone ?

Come, child. I wait for you . . .

MAHRAH *(With a great cry of despair).* . . . "or . . . nothing !"

MOTHER.

Come !

END OF ACT I.

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

TIME : *The same night, half-an hour before dawn.*

SCENE : *The market-place. In the centre of the Square an old stone Cross, with steps leading to it. All round, the houses of the city Nobles, marble palaces, rich in iron-work and carving. At the back of the scene, growing up, shadowy, vast, to the starlight sky, the Cathedral. In the immediate front, to right and left, streets lead from the market-place, and a wide road runs into the Square, close to the Cathedral. The line of houses round is broken at intervals by other side-streets and alleys. The greater part of the scene lies in darkness, but on the right the nearest house is ablaze with light ; every window gleams and flashes, and at the steps, entrance, and on the balustrade of the terrace outside, are flaming torches set on bronze posts. Through the open windows come sounds of music, singing and laughter. The house is Clito's. On the steps of the Cross, dimly seen, are dark, crouching figures, sleepers or watchers. But for them, the market-place is deserted.*

Of a sudden, the music stops, and with a loud burst of talk and laughter, THE DANCERS press through the windows out on to the terrace of the house.

IRENE, *breaking away from the crowd, runs down the steps into the square, calling back to MARCO, who follows her :*

IRENE (*To Marco*). Oh ! I could sing and dance, the long night through.

Here it is dark and cool. Will you not come ?

MARCO, *running to her, stoops and kisses her*.

IRENE (*In mock horror*). Ah ! no.—For shame !—I only bade you “ come.”

MARCO. Your voice said, “ Come.” I swear your looks said more.

IRENE. It is not dark, if you can read my looks.

I will not stay. Now, follow if you dare.

(*She runs away, laughing, into the shadow. MARCO after her.*)

PAULA and MYRTON *come slowly down the steps, to the front of the scene*.

The rest of the DANCERS stay on the terrace.

PAULA. How perfect is the night. Look at those stars,
They dance, whilst here the very houses sleep,
Unconscious of the magic of the skies.

MYRTON. Poor, foolish houses, to be hushed in sleep.

PAULA. Poor men, and women, too, who could be here,
Beneath the stars, but lose to-night in sleep.

MYRTON (*Smiling at her*). Poor, foolish men and women !

PAULA. Why, you laugh ?

MYRTON. I laugh at you ?—Ah ! never.

PAULA. Yes, you do.

But, on a night like this, sleep seems as sad as death.

I want to live each moment . . . count each star . . .

MYRTON (*Softly*). And, Paula, I . . . if you are with me here.

(*He draws her to him.*)

PAULA. Oh ! could we only hold, and keep, this hour.

Why must it fade away . . . for ever pass ?

Why must that cruel Something, which we fear,

Not knowing what it is, take from us all ?

MYRTON. No more sad thoughts. Far happier hours will come.

PAULA. Far happier hours ? But this one hour has gone.

(She clings to him.)

Then they start apart, as IRENE and MARCO come back towards them.

MYRTON *(Not seeing at first who comes)*. Hush ! Someone comes.

IRENE *(Gaily)*.

Marco and I are here.

It was too dark beyond, we could not see.

MARCO *(Teasingly)*. Oh, yes !—Too dark !—You want to “ look ” again.

IRENE *(Indignantly)*. I tell you, no ! I want to sing and dance.

(Running to the steps, she calls to the dancers still on the terrace.)

What ! are you dreaming, all ? Come out and dance.

Here it is dark and cool.—Come out and dance.

A chorus of voices answer her :

DANCERS. We come !—We come !

And about twenty DANCERS, men and women, detach themselves from the group on the terrace, and come laughing down the steps to where IRENE stands.

1ST DANCER *(Woman)*. Ah ! Now I breathe once more.

IRENE *(As the DANCERS begin to place themselves)*.

Stay ! Not too far. The music will sound faint.

2ND DANCER (Man). Shall we stand here?—Is this too far away?

3RD DANCER (Woman). Yes; surely here?

4TH DANCER (Man). No, farther back!

5TH DANCER (Man). No. Here!

6TH DANCER (Woman). How perfect, this!

7TH DANCER (Woman). How beautiful!

8TH DANCER (Woman). How still!

IRENE (*Impatiently*). But we are ready, Marco, why not dance?

MARCO. The music first. You did not bid them play.

9TH DANCER (Man). I go.

MARCO. No. Wait.

(MARCO moves towards the terrace himself, then calls to a man who stands alone, half-way down the steps.)

What, Vitus! Are you there?

Tell them, within, to play. We want to dance.

The music starts again, and IRENE, MARCO and their band of friends begin to dance, half in the shadow, half in the wavering torchlight.

VITUS comes slowly down the steps and joins PAULA and MYRTON, who stand watching the dancers.

PAULA (*Softly*). The dawn will soon be here. See, it gets grey . . .

Suddenly there is a cry of alarm from those DANCERS who stand facing the Cross.

MYRTON (*Pointing*). Look! There are people by the Cross, who move . . .

Is something wrong? And . . . now . . . a man who comes.

It has grown lighter. The men who crouched at the foot of the Cross are now clearly seen. They have risen, and one of them, with cloak thrown back and uplifted arm, springs forward towards the group of DANCERS, who, startled and frightened, give way before him.

THE MAN (*In a loud voice*). Stop dancing, fools! The ground is holy here.

Our Master comes this way.

SOME WOMEN (*Screaming*). He's mad!

OTHERS OF THE WOMEN. Help! Help!

THE MAN. I tell you, go!

1ST DANCER (Woman). Ah! come.

IRENE. I fear to stay!

MARCO (*Angrily, to the man*). And who are you, to order?

IRENE (*To him*). Marco, come!

2ND DANCER (Woman). It surely is some madman!—Let us go!

The WOMEN-DANCERS move back, frightened.

MARCO (*To the dancers*). But I . . . I bid you stay. (*To the man.*) And you can go.

It pleases us to dance, and dance we will.

THE MAN. Once more, I tell you . . . go!

1ST DANCER (Woman). Ah! wherefore stay?

2ND DANCER (Man) (*To Marco*). 'Twere best, indeed, to go . . . for, see! they come.

He points to the Cross. THE WOMEN, seeing the men approaching, cry out in fear.

1ST DANCER (Woman). And we may be in danger!

WOMEN DANCERS. Look!—They come!

IRENE. Whate'er betide, I have no mind to wait.

IRENE *and all the WOMEN, except PAULA, run up the steps to the terrace, and disappear into the house. Some of the MEN follow.*

MARCO (*Furiously to the man*). You insolent ! . . . Come, I will teach you now . . .

THE MAN. You think to touch me ? No, you will not dare. We are too many, and you are too few.

He turns, and with a quick gesture points round the Square, which, as if by magic, with the coming of the dawn has become alive with men. They rise from steps and gateways ; they step out from behind columns and porches ; they seem to spring up from the bare ground ; and, as the cold, grey light steals across the sky, from every side-street, road and alley, dark hurrying forms are seen ; men, women and children, all pouring into the market-place, in a great, resistless, human tide.

MARCO (*Making as if to strike the man*). I do not fear . . . I'll teach you all the more.

VITUS *and MYRTON spring forward and hold him back.*

MYRTON. No, Marco ; no !

VITUS. What madness !—Do not stay !

THE MAN. Strike, if you will.

MYRTON (*Insisting*). No !—Come !

MARCO *hesitates ; then, as MYRTON again tries to draw him away, suddenly :*

MARCO. This time, I go.

But we shall meet again, and soon, I swear !

(He turns on his heel, and disappears into the house.)

THE MAN *moves back towards his companions, and the crowd which now surrounds the Cross.*

2ND DANCER (Man). What can it mean?—the man—and now this crowd?

4TH DANCER (Man). Harcon, of course!—Why, I remember all!
He and his madman dupe and rabble friends,
They leave the town at dawn.

5TH DANCER (Man). And pass this way?

4TH DANCER (Man). So it would seem. And poor Beata, too.

MYRTON. Poor child, she goes because her father goes,
And she will suffer.

4TH DANCER (Man). Yes! he is to blame.
But, then, he seeks a Kingdom, so he says.
I would not be the serf of Hareon . . . King!

(He laughs.)

MYRTON. How long, I wonder, ere we see them back?
A week or two of marching, and scant food,
And, Kingdom or no Kingdom, they'll return.

VITUS *(With bitter emphasis)*. I hope to God we never see them
back!

If I could have my way . . .

MYRTON *(Surprised)*. You hate them so?
They are but madmen.

VITUS. Why, then, wish them here?
You say, and rightly, that you count them mad.
I have no love for madmen; they do harm.

2ND DANCER (Man) (*Pointing*). See how the people stream from every side.

The market-place will soon be filled with men.

5TH DANCER (Man). And, surely, it were best to leave at once ?
There is no need to stay and anger them.

2ND DANCER (Man). There is no need.

3RD DANCER (Man). This is no place for us.

4TH DANCER (Man). And Clito should be told ; it would seem wise

To let the music and the singing cease.

5TH DANCER (Man). True ; it should cease. I go to find him now.

2ND DANCER (Man). And we come, too. It is no place for us.

ALL, *except PAULA, MYRTON and VITUS, hurry up the steps into the house. Then one or two of the MEN come out again, and linger, watching, on the terrace.*

PAULA (*To Myrton*). Think you that it is safe for us to wait ?

I would give much to see them go.

VITUS (*To Myrton, bitterly*). And I !

PAULA. But is it safe ?

MYRTON. What danger can there be ?

Come, stand upon these steps, and you'll see all.

PAULA (*To Vitus*). And you will stay with us ?

VITUS (*As before*). Oh ! yes, I'll stay.

I have no peace until I see them go.

The three move away, and stand on the lower steps of the terrace.

The music ceases, and the murmur of the crowd begins to swell.

More and more people pour into the market-place. They are pushed back against the houses ; they are pressed forward again to the terrace steps ; and still in every street and road and alley the struggle goes on, the struggle to reach the Square.

On the extreme left, just opposite to where Vitus stands, is a closely-veiled figure in the crowd. It is MAHRAH.

And now the clouds begin to flush, the shadows steal away. Another minute, and the whole place is bathed in the red-gold light of morning. In that light the torches round Clito's house flicker strangely. For a few moments there is no sound but the murmur of the crowd. Then, nearer and nearer, comes the solemn music of a chanted hymn, and a procession is seen slowly winding its way down the road near the Cathedral. The people somehow part and make way, and round the Cross a space is cleared.

Then, two by two, the little band of The Master's nearest DISCIPLES—those who go with him to seek the Holy City—file into the Square, and group themselves round the Cross. There are thirty MEN, three WOMEN. Behind come HARCON, MILO, BRUNO, FESTUS, DRASTON, SERVIAN, and BEATA. Last, alone, THE MASTER.

As they advance, they sing :

THE DISCIPLES' HYMN.

DISCIPLES. I have come far,
Through many weary days,

Through many weary nights,
And still the road,
The long, white, silent road
Which winds about the Plain,
Beckons me on.
God ! help me reach the Mountains
Ere I die.

In the sad, distant years, I left my home.
The Mountains called me, and I could not stay.
All that I loved I left, friends, home, and love.
The Mountains called to me.

Others, before, have tried to find the way,
Have tried, and failed. Shall I succeed ?—Who knows ?—
Children, if not, whom I shall never see,
One day will find the road.

For they are there, the Mountains, and they call.
Whether I win, or fail and die, they stand,
Serene and lofty, radiant, shining fair—
The Holy Hills of God !

I have come far,
Through many weary days,
Through many weary nights,
And still the road,
The long, white, silent road
Which winds about the Plain,
Beckons me on.

God ! help me reach the Mountains
Ere I die.

(The Hymn ends.)

THE MASTER *mounts the steps of the Cross, and stands a moment, with bent head. The silence is death-like. He stands a moment so, the next, his head is raised, and his voice rings out, clear, across the Square.*

THE MASTER. Once more, I want to thank you for your love,
Once more, I want to tell you why I go,
Once more, I want to see you face to face.
On earth, perhaps, we shall not meet again,
And, is that so, I would not have you think
I left you lightly, did not prize your love.
My children . . . little children . . .

(His voice falters.)

THE PEOPLE *stretch up their arms to him, and cry :*

PEOPLE. Master, stay !

THE MASTER. God knows that I have loved you well—too well !
But He, my God, has called. I cannot stay.
And now—ten years ago, ten years to-night,—
The vision of God's City came to me.
It was a time of anguish, then, and death.
In every city near, anguish and death.
For the dread Plague had come, and all men mourned.
And day and night—Ah ! yes, all day, all night—
The carts drove down the silent streets to fetch the dead,
And day and night the fear and anguish grew.
For none was spared ; men, women, children, too,

They suffered, struggled, gasped for breath, and died.
And knew not why they suffered, why they died.
Ah! God, the pain of it . . . the bitter pain,
To see their fear, to watch them suffer . . . die!
To hear the children moan and cry for help,
The tender, little children!—God! . . . the pain!
I could not see Him for that bitter pain.
I could not feel His justice or His love.
And then, one night, when all seemed hopeless, lost,
Beside the open grave of one I loved,
The vision of the City came to me.
God's Holy City, radiant, glorious,
All light, all purity, all holiness, all love,
Set in the silence of the snow-white hills.
And, as I stood and waited, lost in prayer,
There came a voice, The Voice, which spake these words:
"God ever cares. And suffering, sin, and Death
Are but the road which leads from earth to Heav'n.
God ever cares. His love is over all.
And He has built a City, here, on earth,
Not in the heavens above, but here on earth,
That men may know He Is, and . . . ever cares.
And whoso finds that City finds, and knows,
God and His Truth."—I must not tell you more.
The vision has been with me these long years,
But when I would have gone, to seek the Hills,
Leaving my work, the Voice cried ever: "Wait!"
But now the Voice cries: "Come!"—I cannot stay.

THE PEOPLE *cry again, low, entreating :*

PEOPLE. Ah ! Master, leave us not !—We need you so !

THE MASTER (*Pointing to the disciples*). And these . . . these
dear ones here . . . they come with me.

They will it so, I cannot say them nay.

For, though all life is holy, and all work,

And is made holy to each man in diff'rent ways,

Yet those who crave the height, who hear the call,

For them there is no choice, they cannot stay.

HARCON. Ah ! yes. We go with you.

DISCIPLES.

We cannot stay.

THE MASTER. And now, my children, now . . . before we part . . .

I say to you again : “ Endure ! Endure ! ”

Through darkness and through doubt, hold fast, endure.

For through endurance, and through that alone,

Can true and lasting victory be won.

Go forward, ever forward, without fear,

For suffering leads to God ; and even . . . sin !

For what is sin ? Why, if you look aright,

It is the greatest chance yet giv'n to man

To rise above himself, and so gain . . . God.

For, to gain Him, there are two ways, but two ;

The way of suffering, and . . . the way of sin.

A PRIEST, *who has been standing in the crowd, listening,
calls out excitedly :*

THE PRIEST. The way of sin ?—No ! Sin is evil . . . death.

I tell you, Sin is death !—All sinners lost !

Yet is there Mercy . . . and Forgiveness, too,
If only you have faith . . . and will believe.

THE MASTER (*Turning towards him*). Oh! you who crave forgiveness for your sins;

Oh! you who pray for Mercy, and preach Faith,
What are they both . . . your Mercy and your Faith?
The creed of cowards, yes!—And you are men!

Ah! there is none on earth so vile, so low,
But he should rather pay the debt in full,
Not cry for “mercy,” letting others pay.

No! Justice, and not Mercy, is our need.
To live each act, and bear its consequence,
In courage and in silence, conqu’ring Life,
So ever, and so only, are we Men.

And Faith? If that means looking up to God,
If it means hope, in spite of sorrow, doubt,
Then Faith, that Faith, is holy and is good.
But if, as when, just now, you cried, “Believe,”
If Faith means fear of question, knowledge, change,
A blind, unreasoning gift of mind and soul,
Then it is evil, wrong, unworthy men.

Ah! in the least, and greatest, serve the Truth.
And if, at times, it seems to lead from God,
Push on, through fear and loneliness, through . . .
doubt

And, at the end, He’s there.—Yes! Serve the Truth.
For can there be a holier task on earth,
For can there be a nobler, higher aim,

Than this—To be a servant, priest of Truth?
One of that great, un-numbered Company,
Who, through all ages, from the dawn of time,
Have striv'n with darkness, and have fought for Light,
So raising up on high the God in Man.
To serve the Truth. Thank God! we all may serve.
There is no life so narrow, poor and mean,
No life which seems these things, to outward eye,
But can, if lived for truth, be great and free.
The ways are many, and we all may serve.
There are the Holy ones, the Chosen, Called,
Those who, from time to time, are sent to earth
To bear great, living witness to the Truth.
And there are those, the lowly, meek and poor,
Who die unheard-of, bearing witness too.
For this, remember always, be your hope,
The witness of the martyrs, heroes, saints,
Those great ones whom we worship, had not been,
But for the daily search and fight for Truth
In myriad unknown lives, throughout the world.
Each open, fearless word, each honest thought,
Each prayer for knowledge, and each cry for light,
Brings nearer, ever nearer, that blest day,
When Truth shall reign on earth, and men see . . . God!
The meaning, Law of Life, that is . . . the Truth!
The glory, Light of Life, that is . . . the Truth!
The Truth of God! . . . The Holy, Holy Truth!
I tell you—ah! I tell you—on this earth

There is but one thing needful—only . . . one.
To find, and know . . . God, and His Holy Truth !

*(He stops, overcome with the intensity of his emotion ;
then, lower, his hands raised in blessing :)*

And now, my children . . . now, we must go hence.
May God Almighty, in His perfect Love,
Guide you, and ever lead you, to His Truth.

*As he blesses them, THE PEOPLE kneel ; men and women
sobbing as if their hearts would break.*

PAULA and MYRTON kneel with the rest.

VITUS alone stands, his face set and grim.

MAHRAH rises. *(Those near her still kneel.) Her veil is
thrown back, showing her face, anguished, terrible.
Her eyes are fixed on The Master.*

THE MASTER bends down, a moment, to Milo, to whom he
speaks low, then he turns as if to descend the steps
of the Cross.

MAHRAH, seeing him about to go, springs forward, with a
wild cry.

MAHRAH. O Master, help !—I cannot stay !—I come !

VITUS *(Turns, hearing her cry, with horror).*

Mahrah ? . . . Almighty God !—It cannot be !

THE MASTER. Mahrah !—My child !

MAHRAH. I cannot stay !—I come !

*The people rise and make way for her. She falls on her
knees at the foot of the Cross, before The Master.*

VITUS rushes down the steps and struggles with the crowd,
trying to reach her.

VITUS (*Out of himself*). Mahrah ! She's mad !—Mahrah ! Come back to me.

(*To the crowd.*) I tell you she is mad.

(*To Mahrah.*) Come back to me.

For God's sake, Mahrah, listen to me—come !

The Crowd begins to murmur angrily.

ONE MAN. What does he mean ?

ANOTHER. We do not want him here.

ANOTHER (*To Vitus*). Keep off, I say.

ANOTHER. And do not let him pass.

THE MASTER. Peace ! Peace, my children ! You must let him through.

MAHRAH (*Seeing Vitus come, to The Master*).

Ah ! do not let him touch me. Master, help !

THE MASTER. I promise none shall harm you. Do not fear.

(*He raises her to her feet.*)

The Crowd lets VITUS pass, and he comes towards Mahrah, breathless, with outstretched hands.

VITUS. Tell me, then, what has happened, Mahrah ?—Speak !

(*She shrinks away from him.*)

Ah ! no. I would not hurt you. Do not shrink.

You have misunderstood, and made mistake.

MAHRAH (*Interrupting*). Between us all is over, for I go.

(*She covers her face with her hands.*)

VITUS. Nay, turn to me and tell me what you fear ?

You know I love you, and would bring you home,

And all will then be well, I promise you.

MAHRAH. I tell you I must go. I cannot stay.

VITUS (*Furiously*). You think that I will let you go with him?

Not while I have the power to keep you here.

And you shall come and on the instant, too . . .

HARCON (*Interrupting him, sternly*).

Enough of this. Enough!—I'll have no threats.

VITUS (*Turning on him*).

Who says no threats? So, Harcon, it is you!

My good friend Harcon!—Ah! I owe you much;

And so do others. Yes! we owe you much.

You wreck our homes, and snatch away weak girls,

Rousing the town to frenzy and to fear,

For some vile end,—you and that madman there.

THE CROWD (*In anger*).

Shame! Shame on him!—Thrice shame!

HARCON.

You shall not speak,

Or make this scene. Mahrah is free to go.

VITUS. But she is not. She is my promised wife.

Mahrah, look up! And tell them you are mine.

If I have wounded you, forgive . . . and . . . come.

MAHRAH (*Looking up; painfully but firmly*).

If it is true you love me, let me go.

VITUS. If it is true?—Oh! God—you mean it, then?

MAHRAH. Have pity on us both, and let me go.

VITUS (*Wildly*). But no! you shall not leave me . . . You shall stay!

Think of your promise and . . . your mother . . . think!

MAHRAH (*With a low cry*). My mother!—God!

VITUS.

You have forgotten all?

You would desert us both?—It cannot be!

MAHRAH *turns blindly to The Master in her grief.*

THE MASTER. You owe him answer. You alone can choose.

VITUS (*Furiously to The Master*).

Silence!—You dare to speak to her? You dare!

THE CROWD (*Stormily*). Away with him!—Away!

THE MASTER.

Peace, children! Peace!

Remember that he suffers. Let him speak.

VITUS. Yes, I will speak, and so that all can hear.

You stand and preach the need of justice . . . you!

Then, tell me . . . all who listen . . . is it just

To come between a mother and her child,

All that she has on earth, her only child,

And kill a man? I ask you . . . is it just?

THE MASTER. But if this child, you love, can only know

The highest and the holiest there is,

By leaving all to seek the living God,

You surely would not hold her to her word?

You know how she has suffered. Give her peace.

VITUS (*Still more bitterly*).

You preach to me, you who have ruined my life!

MAHRAH (*Interposing*). I can no longer bear it, this must end.

(*To Vitus*). For though you have a right to bitterness,

The blame, if blame there is, is mine alone.

He never bade me come. (*To The Master*.) Master, forgive!

THE MASTER. He suffers. There is nothing to forgive.

MAHRAH (*To Vitus*). And I will answer you, for now, at last,
I know that I have chosen what is right,
And I must go—

VITUS. Ah! no . . . have pity . . . stay!

MAHRAH. It is too late. If you had really cared
For what I am, not what I seem to be,
Or had you listened when I cried for help,
I cannot tell . . . but now, . . . it is too late.

VITUS (*Hoarsely*). Your Mother . . . you . . . you kill her. She
will die.

MAHRAH (*Wildly*). No! no! you say it, but it is not true.
She will not die . . . God could not let that be . . .
Oh! Vitus, Vitus! . . . We are suffering both,
Why not have pity on yourself and me?

(*She tries to command herself; then:*)

And . . . listen, if I gave up all, and stayed,
Yes, even then, I could not be your wife.
What right have I to marry, and to bring,
It may be, other life into this world,
When I am still in darkness and in doubt,
Whether the gift of Life is ever good,
Or wholly evil, as I often fear?
What right have I to be another link
In the great chain of being and of life,
Whilst yet I dread in anguish and despair
That all, at last, may end in nothingness?

Yes! all mankind has suffered for, and won,
Passing away as it had never been,
With this the doom of every soul on earth;
Eternal death, after a life of pain.
My God! I can no longer bear this doubt.
Oh! let me suffer . . . die . . . if I may know.

VITUS. Mahrah!

MAHRAH. I told you that it was too late.
Perhaps I should not ask you to forgive,
It is too soon; and . . . yet . . . I ask you to.
Oh! try to think with pity and . . . forgive.
And tell my Mother that I love her still,
Yes! even though I go . . . I . . . love her still . . .

(She breaks down.)

THE MASTER *beckons to BEATA, who goes to her.*

VITUS *(In despair)*. Mahrah! I come!

(He tries to rush to her.)

MILO and FESTUS *prevent him.*

FESTUS. No, no! You cannot pass.

MILO. Surely you would not add to her great pain?

HARCON. And, Master, we should leave, the sun grows strong.

VITUS. One moment . . . Yes! one moment . . . let me speak

With her alone, and, if she then would go . . .

I will not hold her back.

MAHRAH *raises her head, and looks at him.*

MAHRAH. Too late . . . Farewell.

(She turns from him, clinging to Beata.)

He stands as one stunned.

HARCON (*Impatiently*). I beg you, Master, end at once this scene.

I would not urge, but, look—the sun is high.

THE MASTER. In God's name, then, my brothers, let us go.

(*To the Crowd.*) And now, my children, into His safe care

And Holy keeping, I commend you all.

The Crowd cries out to him in grief and love :

SOME. Ah ! Master, leave us not !

OTHERS.

Come yet again !

Still OTHERS. When you have found the City, come again !

HARCON. There is no fear but we shall come again,

As Kings triumphant, then, and knowing all.

THE MASTER. God keep you, little children, in His peace.

Be with us in your prayers . . .

HARCON.

Farewell. We go.

THE CROWD *crying out again :*

SOME. Do not forget us, Master ! Come once more !

OTHERS. We love you and we need you !

OTHERS.

Come once more !

THE DISCIPLES *form into the same order as when they entered the Square, only, this time, MAHRAH is with BEATA.*

The procession begins to move.

Of a sudden, VITUS comes out of his trance-like state, and, seeing Mahrah, tries once more to reach her. A score of men of the crowd seize him and hold him back.

VITUS (*Struggling with the men*).

Mahrah !—My God !—Mahrah !—You shall not go.

(*To the men.*) You think to stop me, do you?—I will pass.
Take that, you fools . . . I tell you . . . I will pass.

(*He strikes them. They strike back.*)

Have pity, Mahrah!—Stay!— (They strike again.)

God's curse on you!

(*He falls back, senseless.*)

THE MASTER pauses. *The Crowd kneel, crying out for his blessing, and, as he blesses, to right and left, THE DISCIPLES once more raise their hymn:*

HYMN.

DISCIPLES. I have come far,
Through many weary days,
Through many weary nights,
And still the road,
The long, white, silent road
Which winds about the Plain,
Beckons me on.
God! help me reach the Mountains
Ere I die.

And, so singing, the procession winds slowly out of sight.

END OF ACT II.

ACT THREE

ACT THREE

TIME : *Autumn, nearly a year and a half later.*

SCENE : *A gorge in the mountains. It is early morning, and a cold, white mist hangs about the rocks, shutting out all view. The place is barren and desolate, a valley of scattered rocks and piled grey stones. As far as can be seen, the mountains rise up sheer all round, the back of the scene, however, is completely hidden by the mist. On the right, at the front of the scene, a narrow path leads from the valley, almost overhung, at its entrance, by an upright boulder, shaped like a rough-hewn cross. On the left, opposite, another path winds upwards.*

There is no stir of life, till, presently, three figures appear, coming forward slowly through the mist ; three men, gaunt and ragged, the disciples, SERVIAN, BRUNO and DRASTON.

BRUNO. We are too early here, so it would seem,

For no one else has passed into the gorge.

Yet Harcon said : " The hour after dawn."

Unless I failed to understand him right ?

DRASTON. There is no room for doubt. I heard him plain.

All were to meet one hour after dawn.

SERVIAN. And still no sign . . . no sound. It is most strange.

As he finishes, FESTUS appears, hurrying towards them from the path on the right.

FESTUS (*Breathlessly*). I thought as much . . . I thought you would be here. .

Beata's worse . . . far worse ; he cannot come . . .

Harcon, I mean, until the danger's o'er.

I saw him, for one moment, by the cave,

And, God ! his face . . . you would have said, one mad !

DRASTON (*Impatiently*). But, is she ill or no, we cannot wait.

FESTUS. He said, within the hour he would come,

He would not fail. I ran and told them all,

And they are waiting, till the hour's past,

For Harcon and the goatherd . . .

BRUNO (*Eagerly*).

What ? He's there ?

SERVIAN (*With excitement*).

You saw him, and you spoke with him yourself ?

BRUNO. And what they said is true ? . . .

SERVIAN (*As before*).

He knows a way ?

FESTUS. He knows a way . . . the way . . .

BRUNO (*With emotion*).

O God ! . . . at last !

DRASTON. If that be true . . .

BRUNO.

Then are we saved at last !

SERVIAN (*Anxiously*). But are you sure ? Tell us yet once again . . .

You saw him ! And you spoke with him yourself ?

He knows a way which leads from out the hills

Down to the Plain below ?

FESTUS.

He swears he does,

And he has ranged the mountains since his youth,
Seeking, each summer, with his little flock,
For pastures new, till winter drove them forth,
Down to the lower hills which touch the Plain.

BRUNO (*Deeply moved*).

Thank God ! Thank God ! There is then hope at last !

SERVIAN. Ah ! but I cannot yet believe it true . . .

After the long-drawn anguish of these months,
To see, once more, the peaceful, smiling Plain,
The orchards, and the homesteads, and the grass
All starred with flowers, and the lofty trees,
The white walls of the City, of our home . . .

DRASTON. I would not count too sure ; the Plain is far.

These cursed hills still hold us in their grip.

SERVIAN (*Bitterly*). Ten months we've wandered, frozen, and
half-starved,

In storm, and rain, and mist . . . yes, always . . . mist.

The cruel, cold, white mist ! Ten months—O God !

BRUNO. But if the goatherd knows . . . You say he does ?

FESTUS. Or, rather, Harcon says it. He knows all.

For he it was who found him . . .

SERVIAN (*Interrupting*).

Tell us.

DRASTON.

Where ?

FESTUS. He went last night, as is of late his wont,
To bring fresh water from the distant stream—
It stills Beata's fever, so he thinks—
And, as he left the stream, the moon shone out,

And, in the shadow of a fallen rock,
He saw the goatherd sleeping, with his goats.
For, in that storm which raged, a week ago,
The man had lost his way, and wandered far,
Or we had never, surely, seen him here.

BRUNO. To think . . . O God ! . . . but for that storm . . .

DRASTON. And then ?

FESTUS. Then Harcon told him how we, too, were lost,
And how we sought, and vainly sought, the Plain.
And he, the man, said, "Yes," he knew a way,
One pass remained still open, possible,
And that one pass led straight into the Plain.

SERVIAN. Then it is true ? And we are saved . . . at last ?

(He sinks down on a rock and covers his face with his hands.)

DRASTON. We should not lose one instant. We should leave.
Our little store of food is nearly gone,
The days close in . . .

FESTUS. The goatherd thinks so, too.
For should snow fall but once, all hope were lost.

SERVIAN. All hope were lost ? . . . All chance were gone ?
But any moment, Festus, snow may fall !
Where's Harcon ? . . . Bid him come . . . We cannot wait.
For God's sake, bid him come. We cannot wait.

FESTUS. I told you, and I say again, he comes.
And all is ready, waiting, we can go.
For, ev'n without the goatherd and his help,
Harcon had left.

BRUNO (*Rising*). But if Beata's worse . . . ?

FESTUS. He still had left; for, can she reach the Plain,
She'll live, he thinks.

BRUNO (*Nervously, hesitating*). And . . . Mahrah? What of
her?

Did Harcon speak of Mahrah? And . . . of . . . him?

DRASTON (*Turning on him*). How dare you speak to us, to
me . . . of him?

BRUNO (*As before*). But . . . surely . . . you would never leave
them here?

FESTUS (*Coldly*). The way is free for all who choose to go.

BRUNO. But . . . do they know the danger? That we leave?

FESTUS (*Impatiently*).

What would you more? A messenger was sent—

It was Beata's wish—to bid him come.

What Harcon says to all, he too can hear,

And then the choice is his, to go, or stay.

DRASTON (*Angrily*).

What would you more?—Oh, it is well for you,

To plead and urge forgiveness . . . pity . . . love!

BRUNO. But I . . . I never said . . .

DRASTON.

You thought it, though.

BRUNO (*With feeling*).

I only meant we could not leave them here

To certain death. Mahrah has done no wrong.

And I . . . at times . . . I cannot help but grieve,

Yes, still . . . for him. You see, I loved him once.

DRASTON (*With violence*). You loved him once? My God! so did we all.

Was ever man so trusted and so loved?

Oh! it is well indeed for you . . . for . . . you!

What have you suffered . . . lost? But I . . . my wife . . .

All that I had on earth, through him, lies dead!

BRUNO (*Forgetting his nervousness, with warmth*).

But he . . . he suffers, too. Look at his face,

The anguish there. Has he not also lost?

First grew the murmur and the discontent

At hardship of the way; and, then, the cry:

“The City! Show the City! You have failed!”

And Harcon’s rage . . . Then, last, the fever came.

Oh! but be just—despite your grief, be just.

He was not God. He could not stay its course,

Though day and night he gave his soul in prayer.

And, as the Brethren sickened still, and died,

Then Milo, then . . . your wife . . . his agony!

Why, he had gladly died ten thousand times,

Could, dying, he have saved.—You know it well.

But you . . . you had no mercy . . . drove him forth . . .

With curses drove him forth . . .

DRASTON (*Springing toward him, with uplifted arm*).

We’ll drive you, too,

You traitor . . . Judas!

FESTUS (*Intervening*). Ah! for shame . . . for shame!

What madmen are you both to quarrel now,

When every hour that comes may be your last.

Enough! I'll hear no more. And, Draston, come.
For I would make all ready ere we go.

(He turns to go.)

SERVIAN, *stopping him, points towards the path on the left.*

SERVIAN. But look! Look yonder! . . . there, between those rocks!

Two figures moving . . . yes! they come this way.

Good God! it is The Master . . . Mahrah too . . .

DRASTON *(With bitter scorn)*. The Master? Bruno's Master!

FESTUS *(Sternly)*. Hush! I pray.

And Servian, you are right, we'd better go.

I have no wish to meet him.

SERVIAN.

Nor have I.

(They both begin to move away.)

DRASTON *(Sneering, to Bruno)*.

But surely you will stay? Your master comes!

He joins the other two. All disappear by the path on the right—all but BRUNO. He follows them slowly, hesitates, stops, and then turns, just as

THE MASTER and MAHRAH come forward from the path on the left.

THE MASTER *is changed, his figure bent, his face worn with suffering, but the greatest change is in his look. There is now no trace of the calm radiance of eighteen months ago. He looks half-stunned with grief and care. He comes forward very slowly, MAHRAH a pace or two behind. She, too, has changed, suffering and want have left their mark on her, but there is also a new*

*look on her face, of serenity and of great gentleness,
which is very beautiful.*

THE MASTER *sinks down on one of the scattered rocks.*

BRUNO, *with a furtive look behind, to make sure that he is
not watched, comes quickly to Mahrah.*

BRUNO (*Hurriedly, and low*).

They leave to-day, for they have found a guide,
Who'll lead us to the Plain, and you must come.
Should snow once block the pass, 'twere certain death.
I hasten'd back to warn you. Make him come.

*(With another look round, he hurries after the others, and
disappears on the right.)*

MAHRAH *watches him go, and then comes towards The
Master.*

MAHRAH. Think you this is the place ?

THE MASTER (*Rousing himself*). Harcon said here.

MAHRAH. Master . . .

THE MASTER (*Shrinking in pain*).

Ah ! do not call me that . . . it hurts.

MAHRAH. I would not hurt you.

THE MASTER. Yes, I know. Forgive.

You, who have much to pardon, once again . . . forgive.

MAHRAH. To pardon . . . I ?

THE MASTER. All you have suffered . . . lost . . .

Because I dare not trust myself to speak,

Because I dare not, Mahrah, . . . do not think . . .

(His voice breaks.)

MAHRAH *kneels down beside him.*

MAHRAH. Could I but learn to help and comfort you.

THE MASTER.

You do. But there are times when all seems dark.

So dark . . . so dark . . .

MAHRAH. Yet . . . will you try to speak ?

God gives us speech to ease the weight of pain.

THE MASTER. Mahrah, I think, at times, I shall go mad.

Do you remember how they called me mad ?

At times I wish—O God ! how I have wished—

That I were really mad. For then I should forget.

I should not see their faces, drawn with pain ;

I should not hear their voices, day and night,

Crying aloud : “ We trusted you, and . . . died.

Because we loved and followed you, we died.”

Ah ! Milo, Milo ! Had I died . . . not you.

MAHRAH (*Softly*). Yet, he had never wished it otherwise.

It is not hard to die for those we love.

THE MASTER.

But when death comes through you, to those you love.

MAHRAH (*Rising*). Is death so great an evil, do you think ?

Would you withhold it, lay the choice with you,

Even from those you cherish most and love ?

To live and die, that is our heritage,

Won for us through the fear and bitter pain

Of million years—to live and die as . . . men,

With conscious knowledge, conscious suffering.

That is our birthright, and I count it great.

Would you renounce it, ev’n for those you love ?

Would you debar them from that heritage,
That noble human heritage of pain ?
To be made one with the vast host of dead,
To share their lot, to follow them, and face
The Darkness and the Fear, who would refuse ?
Oh ! it is very sacred, wonderful,
To be on earth a suff'ring, dying . . . man.

THE MASTER (*Springing up*).

To die yourself, but to bring agony
To those you love . . . to know that, but for you . . .
And even that, O God ! is not the worst.
I spoke of darkness . . . Do you guess how dark ?
Mahrah, I fight it . . . yes, I fight it still,
But, think ! if it were true . . . all was . . . a dream . . .
The vision . . . and the City . . . just . . . a dream . . .
And that I heard no voice . . . received no call.
I pray . . . and still I pray . . . no answer comes.
There is no light . . . no sign.—My God, not that !
Not their lives sacrificed and giv'n in vain,
For just a dream . . . a lie !—My God, not . . . that !
Oh ! for their sake in mercy, hear . . . and . . . save.

(He turns away blindly, to hide his anguish, and for a space there is silence. Then he comes back to Mahrah.)

Forgive me, Mahrah, will you ? And . . . forget.
I did not mean to speak, I had no right.
You have so much to bear, you poor, poor child,
And I but add to it. Will you forgive ?

MAHRAH. You ask forgiveness, you who have giv'n all.

The noblest . . . best . . . (*Her voice fails*). Master, in my
dark hour,

You told me that the cross of loneliness,

The cross Christ bore, meant loneliness from God,

And all must bear it once, who seek Him here.

To some that cross may come through their own pain,

To you it comes through theirs, yet, are they God's.

THE MASTER. I thought that. Now, I cannot feel it true.

Something in me has died.

MAHRAH.

To rise again !

Ah ! but I know the torture of your soul.

To learn the great acceptance for ourselves

Of all Life brings, is hard ; but harder far,

To learn that same acceptance for those dear.

That, in all truth, is God's last test to man.

THE MASTER (*Repeats, low*).

That in all truth, is God's last test to man.

*A silence falls between them, broken, presently, by the
sound of distant voices.*

MAHRAH. Listen ! Their voices. I must tell you first

That as, just now, we came,—you did not see—

Bruno ran forward from the pathway there,

To give us warning that they leave to-day,

And go to seek the Plain. A guide is found.

THE MASTER (*Strangely*). They leave to-day ?

MAHRAH.

He whispered something more,

I could not hear, about a pass and snow.

He spoke in kindness, and he looked so grieved.

He seemed to fear for you.

THE MASTER (*As before*). They leave . . . to-day ?

MEN'S VOICES *are heard distinctly.*

MAHRAH (*Pointing*). Look ! They are coming. (*Quickly*). But, before they come,

I want to tell you that I have no fear.

The mist of doubt has risen, and I know

The Holy City stands, and God is there.

THE MASTER *takes her hand for a moment ; then, as the men begin to appear through the mist, he turns and moves further to the right, where he stands close to a fallen rock. MAHRAH near him.*

THE MEN *come forward in twos and threes, talking, till they see who stands waiting there. At once all talk is hushed. There is a heavy silence.*

THE MASTER *makes an involuntary movement to go to them, but they turn from him with lowering glances. He stands then as before.*

All the DISCIPLES are there—the twenty who have escaped the fever. Of the three women, Draston's wife is dead, the other two are with Beata.

After a few moments, FESTUS, DRASTON and SERVIAN appear, BRUNO following. And then there is a murmur of excitement, and HARCON is seen coming from the path on the right, and with him a strange-looking figure, clad in rough skins—THE GOATHERD.

The murmur grows louder, the men press forward towards HARCON, but he waves them back, and stops himself, opposite to where, some distance off, THE MASTER is

still standing. HARCON looks haggard, and his eyes are wild. He avoids looking at The Master.

HARCON (*In a harsh voice*). Are all assembled, Festus ?

FESTUS. All are here.

HARCON. What I have come to say is quickly said.

You know that since the fever and our loss—

(*With emphasis.*) Our cruel loss—I have for ever tried
To find some way to lead you from these hills.

Till now, I failed, for every path seemed blocked.

But as, last night, I sought the distant stream,

I came upon this man, this goatherd here,

Who knows the one pass open, possible,

By which in safety we may reach the Plain.

THE MEN (*Excitedly*). The way ? He knows the way ?

ONE MAN. Thank God !

ANOTHER. At last !

ANOTHER. Oh, Harcon, you have saved us !

THE MEN. Saved—at last !

Harcon ! Our saviour, Harcon !

ONE MAN. Saved—at last !

HARCON (*Holding up his hand*).

I beg you, cease. For there is more to tell.

The goatherd says we are in danger here,

Danger so great that we must leave at once,

Or face the worst. If snow should fall, and lie,

The only way across the precipice

Were blocked till Spring. Our little store of food

Would long be gone. We, therefore, leave or die.

SOME MEN. O God, have mercy !

OTHERS.

Let us leave at once.

SERVIAN. Why wait, when there is danger ?

THE MEN.

Come at once.

HARCON (*Stopping the clamour*).

I tell you, all is ready, and we go.

Within the hour we start.—Will that be right ?

(*Turning to Goatherd.*)

GOATHERD. Within the hour, but not one instant more.

There is a sudden danger in the hills,

Which only those who dwell among them know.

The goats are restless.

SERVIAN (*Anxiously, to him*). And does that mean snow ?

GOATHERD. The snow is like the wind—it comes from far,

And none can tell the hour when it falls.

HARCON (*Impatiently*).

All, then, is settled, and we start from here.

I go to fetch Beata from the cave.

But first, (*he hesitates*)—I promised her—

(*Turns with an effort towards The Master ; in a harsh voice.*)

You come with us ?

THE MASTER (*Low*). I thank you . . . but . . . I stay.

HARCON (*Shrugging his shoulders*). The choice is yours.

And Mahrah ? (*Turning to her.*)

But there is no need to ask.

For you there is no question.

MAHRAH.

I must stay.

HARCON (*Sharply*).

You did not hear. I said, to stay meant death.

MAHRAH. Only if God should will ; not otherwise.

HARCON (*Bitterly*).

“ Only if God should will ” !—You, then, would die ?

MAHRAH. I seek the Holy City, and the way

Which leads thereto must, surely, be of God,

Ev’n though it pass through agony and death.

And while I hear His call, I still must seek,

And ever seek, until His voice says : “ Rest.”

HARCON. The City ?—Holy City ! Are you mad ?

What ! You remember all, and still believe ?

There is no Holy City—has been none,

Nor ever will be, while men live on earth.

MAHRAH. Yet shall I surely find it, in His time.

HARCON (*With passion*).

Is it, you think, of God, we stand to-day

In deadly peril, frozen and half-starved ?

Is it of Him, those graves are lying there,

Out on the bleak hill-side, whilst those we love . . .

Is it, in truth, of God ?—I tell you, no !

It is not God has brought us to this pass,

But one . . . a man . . . I have no words for him.

To cheat and fool those who so blindly loved,

Who gave in faith their all.—I have no words.

The City !—Holy City !—Oh, my God !

The Kingdom promised, of eternal joy,

And these bare rocks ! Why, I could almost laugh,

But for the hell and torment of my soul,
To leave our home for this. To starve . . . to die . . .
to . . . rot !

THE MASTER (*With a cry of pain*).

Have pity, Harcon.

THE MEN *murmur angrily at the sound of his voice.*

HARCON (*Beside himself, turning on The Master*).

What ! You dare to speak ?

DRASTON (*Springing forward*).

You killed my wife, now give her back to me.

SOME MEN. And . . . Milo ?

ANOTHER.

Where is Milo ?

SERVIAN (*Bitterly*).

Whom you . . . loved.

FESTUS. He dares not answer you, for, through his fault,

He knows them dead.

SOME MEN.

He brought us here to die.

OTHERS. Yes ! Lured us from the Plain, to starve and die.

ONE MAN. Impostor !

ANOTHER.

Liar !

ANOTHER.

Murderer !

ANOTHER.

Knave !

ANOTHER.

Cheat !

DRASTON (*Wildly*). He killed my wife, why should we let him live ?

BRUNO (*Nervously, trying to interpose*).

Good God ! No violence ! I pray you cease.

DRASTON (*As before*). Did he have mercy, when he led us here ?

His life is forfeit.

ONE MAN.

Down with him, I say.

THE MEN. Why should we spare him ?

A MAN

Down with him, I say.

As the MEN cry out, they move forward, threatening The Master.

MAHRAH *springs in front of him.*

MAHRAH. Help, Harcon !—Help !

THE MASTER (*Puts her gently aside, going to meet them.*)

My life is gladly yours.

THE MEN *hesitate and stop, afraid to touch him.*

BRUNO (*To Harcon*). You cannot let them kill him.

MAHRAH (*To HARCON again, who has stood, not attempting to calm the men.*)
Harcon !—Help !

Beata, were she here . . .

HARCON (*Starting*).

Yes !

(*To the men.*)

Let him be.

(*To Mahrah.*) And you . . . give me your answer now.

THE MEN *draw back, half in obedience to Harcon, half in awe of The Master.*

MAHRAH.

I stay.

HARCON (*Less harshly*). But she . . . she made me promise her . . .

MAHRAH.

I stay.

HARCON (*With more feeling*).

Ah, but you have not thought . . . you are too young

To yield all hope of life. You mean to stay ?

You mean to seek the City, which you dream ?

For it is but a dream, an evil dream.

(MAHRAH *makes a movement, as if to protest.*)

Why ask him, then, yourself, does he believe ?
Does he still hope ?—No, I will ask for you.

(To The Master.)

The Holy City—do you seek it still ?

The Vision—do you see it ?—hear the Voice ?

(Contemptuously.) I ask not for myself, alas ! I know.

But this child here, who follows where you lead,

I ask for her. Now, answer. Can you swear,

Yes ! on your soul, that what you preach'd was true ?

HARCON *has drawn nearer to THE MASTER, who still stands close to the fallen rock.*

THE MEN, *listening, draw nearer, too.*

THE MASTER *(Low)*. O God !

HARCON *(With greater insistence)*.

You hope to find the City still ?

The Vision was of God ?

THE MASTER, *his face set and grey, tries to speak, but fails.*

MAHRAH *(To Harcon)*.

You torture him.

(To The Master.) Ah ! do not try to answer, for I know.

HARCON. But speak you must. Her life is in your hands.

THE MASTER *(As before)*. Almighty God !

FESTUS *(To the men)*.

He cannot answer.

SERVIAN *(Pointing)*.

Look !

THE MEN *(Angrily)*. Shame ! Shame on him !

FESTUS.

He cannot answer.

SERVIAN.

Look !

HARCON (*Louder*). Once more, I bid you answer. In the Name
Of Him you say you worship and still serve,
The Vision and the City are they true?

THE MASTER (*Forcing himself to speak, each word wrung out with agony*).

You . . . ask . . . me . . . are they . . . true? . . . I . . . dare
. . . not . . . say . . .

He reels, and falls across the rock, his face hidden, seemingly half-conscious.

MAHRAH, *with a swift movement, kneels beside him.*
There is silence.

Suddenly the silence is broken by a WOMAN'S VOICE,
calling from the path on the right.

WOMAN (*Still invisible*).

Harcon!—Bid Harcon come—We need him here.

(She appears, running forward.)

Harcon!

HARCON. Who calls?

WOMAN (*Breathlessly*). Beata needs you . . . Come.

HARCON (*With a wild cry*).

Beata!—Is she worse?—For God's sake, speak.

WOMAN (*As before*).

She looks so strange . . . so strange . . . and calls for you.

We cannot quiet her.

HARCON. O God!—I come.

He rushes off to the right, THE WOMAN following.

THE MEN *stand, looking anxiously at each other; they have forgotten The Master.*

FESTUS (*After a moment*).

Beata ! I must go. If she should die. . . .

He hurries after Harcon, followed by two of the men.

BRUNO. If she should die.

DRASTON. There is no "If." She will.

GOATHERD.

The mountains know . . . they know. They keep their own.
When comes, each year, the hour to seek the Plain,
They ever claim one goat ; then, let us free.

SERVIAN (*Anxiously*).

But, meanwhile, what of us ? Are we to wait,
With, every moment, peril drawing near ?

GOATHERD. The hour he fixed has nearly come, and gone.

SERVIAN (*Shrill with fear*). The hour has gone ?

THE MEN. You say the hour has gone ?

GOATHERD. Has nearly gone.

SERVIAN. And we, like fools, stand here !

(*Excitedly to the Goatherd.*)

Show us the way at once. We cannot wait.

BRUNO. But . . . Harcon ? And Beata . . .

SERVIAN. Let them stay !

THE MEN. No, they must come with us. We need his help.

ANOTHER. Harcon must come.

SEVERAL MEN. We will not go without.

SERVIAN (*To the men*).

You will not go without ? You mean to wait ?

Then, come he shall. I'll bring him here myself.

(He turns and runs off to the right. As he disappears, he calls back to Draston.)

See all is ready, Draston . . . bring the food . . .

DRASTON *(To the men)*.

He's right. And you, come, help me.

THE MEN.

Yes, we come.

GOATHERD *(Low to himself)*.

The mountains know . . . they know. I'll fetch the goats.

DRASTON, THE GOATHERD, and all THE MEN, except
BRUNO, *hurry off to the right.*

BRUNO *hesitates, and then comes towards Mahrah.*

BRUNO. Mahrah !

(She does not hear at first. He touches her ; then she turns and rises, moving away from The Master.)

He is not hurt ! . . . I . . . Can I help ?

MAHRAH. I thank you from my heart ; but none can help,

Or, rather, none but God.

BRUNO *(Low)*.

Yes, none but God.

He bows his head ; then goes in silence, following Draston.

MAHRAH *stands, her eyes on The Master, her lips moving in prayer. After a few minutes, she speaks, unconsciously, aloud :*

MAHRAH. Grant him to see Thy Vision once again.

Grant him Thy peace . . . Thy truth . . .

She goes near to THE MASTER, who suddenly moves, raises himself, and turns towards her.

Who sanctified all failure, for . . . He failed.
And when the shadows deepen, He draws near.
I tried to find Him oft, but where men throng,
Vibrating to the insistent call of Life,
I found Him not. Nor where His churches stand,
Apart, in hallowed beauty—No! For there
I found a King enthroned, not Christ the Man.
Yet I had hope. At times, He seemed to pass
Where men and women worked, in faith and love,
For other men; at times, when twilight fell,
I thought to see, in hush'd and darken'd rooms
Where children slept, the flutter of His robe,
Those little children whom He loved so well!
But though I sought . . . and sought . . . I found Him
not.

Ah! but I know Him now, His light shines clear
When comes the hour, as this world counts, to fail,
And all seems dark. His light—yes, then—shines clear.
For, think! He served, Who could have had all
power.

He took, Himself, and drank the cup of pain,
And gave that cup to those He loved, then . . . died.
And by His Cross He shows the given life
Is ever, in God's Kingdom, the life gained,
Fulfilment of that higher, holier Law,
Which changes and transmutes eternally
The things of earth to radiant things of Heaven.

(She pauses. Lower.)

Yet stands that Law. For you . . . for those you love.
Will you not trust, as Christ, our Father . . . God ?

(THE MASTER *moves a step nearer to her ; his head raised,
his face changing.*)

And, then, for those . . . those others who mistook,
Thinking the Call was theirs, not yours alone,
Grieve not too much for them. A day will dawn
When, in that home they left, and now would seek,
The meaning and the lesson will grow clear.
Then, in despite the mist of doubt and pain
Which veils from them the mountain-height of Truth,
They will look up, once more, in faith and hope,
To God's Eternal Hills, and they will hear,
After long years, His Voice, which spake through you :
" God ever cares. And suffering, Sin and Death
Are but the road which leads from earth to Heav'n.
God ever cares. His love is over all,
And He has built a City, here on earth,—
Not in the Heav'ns, above, but here on earth—
That men may know He is, and ever cares.
And whoso finds that City, finds, and knows,
God . . . and His Truth."

THE MASTER (*With a great cry, his arms uplifted*).

The Voice !—O God ! . . . Thy Voice.

*He stands a moment so, then, turning, walks away to the
right, farther back, where he stops, his face covered
with his hands. As he moves, THE MEN are heard*

returning. Voices, cries, and a sound of falling stones coming through the mist.

A VOICE. Quick, Bruno.

ANOTHER. To the left.

ANOTHER. Lend here a hand.

BRUNO *hurries forward from the path on the right, calling to those behind :*

BRUNO. Beware that rock—don't stand beneath, it moves,
Or seemed to move. Beware !

DRASTON, *following, comes towards Mahrah.*

DRASTON (*To her*). Has Servian been ?

MAHRAH. He has not come.

DRASTON. Or sent a messenger ?

MAHRAH *shakes her head ; then turns also, and moves away, stopping close to where THE MASTER stands, his face still hidden, absorbed in prayer. They are now on the right of the scene, some little distance back, and the men, as they come forward from the path, pass in front of them. All the men carry sticks and bundles, or have packs slung on their shoulders.*

DRASTON (*Looking round*).

The goatherd, too ? I thought to find them both.

For all is ready now, and we can go

Whenever Harcon comes.

ONE MAN. If come he does.

ANOTHER. I fear the worst.

ANOTHER. You mean, Beata's dead ?

BRUNO. O God ! . . . If that should be !

One of those on the outside of the group, turning, points to the path, and says :

ANOTHER.

No. Look ! They come !

As the men turn to look, SERVIAN runs forward.

SERVIAN (*Breathlessly*).

All's well, they come . . . Harcon . . . Beata, too.

There is with her some miracle of change,

So Festus said, for now at last she sleeps.

They bear her in the litter . . .

The same MAN as before.

Look !—They come !

FESTUS and the TWO WOMEN appear, and as they join the group, HARCON is seen behind them, walking in front of Beata's litter, which is carried by the two men who left before with Festus.

Close by the entrance of the path HARCON turns and speaks to the bearers.

HARCON (*Low*).

Go gently on these stones. No, place the litter here,

Till we can start. I would not have her wake,

For now at last she sleeps ; the fever's gone.

The bearers put down the litter, then come forward with HARCON, joining the others.

THE MEN (*To Harcon*). Harcon, thank God !

BRUNO.

She's better ?

HARCON.

Yes—at last.

As I was called, there fell a sudden peace ;

A change so great, it seemed a miracle

To those who watched. No fever, and no pain.
And, when I bent o'er her, she turned and smiled,
As in old days, and slept.

SERVIAN (*Impatiently*). Then we can go?

HARCON. We only wait the goatherd . . .

SERVIAN (*Interrupting*). But he comes.

As he speaks, THE GOATHERD advances from the path on the right, and, passing Beata's litter, comes towards Harcon. He holds in his hands a shepherd's pipe.

GOATHERD (*Hurriedly*).

The mist is rising fast—that oft brings snow.

Come, now—at once—and I will call the goats.

(He raises the pipe to his lips.)

At the first shrill notes, THE MASTER lifts his head, turns, and moves slowly towards Beata.

THE GOATHERD still pipes. The goats come running to him, some from the path, some jumping down from the rocks above. His flock seems gathered, when suddenly a large black goat is seen, standing on the overhanging boulder shaped like a roughly-hewn cross. The goat stands a moment or so, then springs ; and as it springs, the rock, with a loud report, comes crashing down towards the litter.

HARCON (*With a wild cry, rushing forward*).

Beata ! . . . Oh ! My God !

THE MASTER *throws himself in front of the litter, just as the rock is about to fall on it ; and, as by a miracle, he pushes it away in time to save Beata, he falls himself, and is caught by the rock.*

FESTUS (*Following Harcon*). No ! no ! She's safe.

THE MEN *run after them*.

HARCON *snatches Beata from the litter in his arms*.

HARCON. Beata ! My Beata !

FESTUS (*Bending over THE MASTER, who lies motionless*).

God ! He's dead.

THE MEN *crowd round, in excitement and confusion*.

HARCON, *absorbed in Beata, is unconscious of what passes*.

A MAN (*Helping Festus*). He is but hurt.

BRUNO.

Thank God !

SERVIAN.

You say he lives ?

FESTUS. Raise, then, the rock, and lift him. Bring him here.

THE MEN *lift The Master, and following Festus, carry him to the centre of the scene, placing him gently on the ground*.

MAHRAH *comes forward, her face calm and steadfast, and kneels beside him*.

FESTUS *kneels, too, examining him*.

BRUNO, SERVIAN and THE GOATHERD *stand near*.

FESTUS (*Turning, shaking his head*).

There is no sign of life. He does not breathe.

BRUNO. It cannot be he's dead. Try yet again.

FESTUS *bends over him once more*.

GOATHERD.

He will not live. The mountains know . . . they know.

They ever claim, and keep, their own.

FESTUS (*Rising*).

He's dead.

BRUNO (*Kneeling in his place*).

But Festus, you are wrong . . . I see him breathe.

And . . . now . . . he moves . . . and tries to speak. Look !
look !

MAHRAH *raises The Master in her arms. The radiant
look of peace has come back to his face ; his voice
is feeble but clear.*

THE MASTER (*Pausing between each word*).

Forgive me . . . little children . . . for . . . I . . . die.

I loved . . . you . . . always . . . and . . . I . . . love . . . you
. . . still.

(*Suddenly his voice is louder*).

The City . . . Holy City . . . is . . . no . . . dream . . .

God . . . gave . . . to . . . me . . . the . . . Vision . . . It . . .
is . . . true !

*He sinks back, and, as he does, the first flakes of snow begin
to fall.*

SERVIAN (*With a cry of terror*).

O God ! The snow !

THE MEN (*In fear*). The snow !

BRUNO.

Have mercy !

THE MEN.

Help !

HARCON (*Calling to the men*). Bring quick the litter here !

(*To Beata*.)

Yes : all is well.

(*To the men*.) No panic, men.

(*Placing her in the litter*.)

Beata, all is well.

GOATHERD (*Running in front of the men, and pointing towards the back of the scene*).

If you will follow now, there yet is time.

The way lies here.

He rushes ahead, with the goats, followed by HARCON, THE WOMEN and THE BEARERS with the litter. They all disappear in the mist at the back of the scene.

THE MEN run after them, with shouts and cries.

SERVIAN (*As he goes*). O Christ!—Have mercy!—Help!

FESTUS and DRASTON are the last to leave.

FESTUS (*Calling back to MAHRAH and BRUNO, who still kneel by The Master*).

Come, both of you, there is no hope: he's dead:

BRUNO rises, and sees that all have gone.

BRUNO (*Terrified*).

Look! They have gone, and left us . . . we are lost!

For God's sake, Mahrah, come!—I dare not stay!

(And, with a cry of fear, he follows them.)

MAHRAH kneels on in silence, supporting The Master.

The snow-flakes fall faster and faster, till all is white.

Then, the snow slackens and stops. It is very still.

The mist begins to rise.

THE MASTER lifts his head. His face is radiant with a great joy, calm with a great peace.

THE MASTER.

Mahrah . . . at last the Light . . . the Vision comes . . .

I . . . leave you . . . In His keeping . . . He will guide.

Nor pain . . . nor sin . . . nor Death . . . is . . . Conqueror . . .
But . . . God . . . alone.

(Raising himself, his voice stronger, his face more radiant.)

Thy Voice ! . . . My God ! . . . I . . . come !

(Suddenly he stands erect, his arms outstretched, his face alight.)

(In a ringing voice.) Glory to Thee, O God !

He falls back, dead.

As he falls, the mist rolls away, and there, above, on the crest of the lofty, shining Hills, stands revealed the Holy City, all light, all truth, all holiness, all love.

MAHRAH *(With a great cry of praise and triumph !)*.

Glory to God !

The light grows stronger and ever stronger, dazzling in brightness, in purity, in strength. And still the light grows stronger and ever stronger, till at last the whole place is filled with the Glory from on High, and in that great and holy Light all vanishes, and is lost.

THE END.



h/k

A & B
BOOKSELLERS
specialists in
theatre books

600 W. 161st ST. N. Y. 32

